

the VA was \$1.1 billion in the red. That was under a House Leadership that was Republican, and that left short many of the needs of our veterans.

It was when the Democrats in January took over that we pushed this largest single appropriations bill in the history of the VA to address all of those unmet needs, and I just asked my colleagues across the aisle to work with us. No one is complaining here today about the content of that bill or the process that brought it to this floor.

Many of the ideas in that bill are part and parcel of what my colleagues on the other side of the aisle would hope for. We just need to work together today to get this bill to the floor, get it done, and get it to the President for his signature.

#### COUPLING APPROPRIATIONS BILLS

(Mr. GOODLATTE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GOODLATTE. Madam Speaker, I rise today to oppose the majority's plan to combine two unrelated appropriations bills, the Department of Labor, Health and Human Services and Department of Education and the funding for Veterans and Military Construction.

I oppose this combined approach because, in doing so, the Democrat majority is using political maneuvering to avoid tough spending choices in the controversial Labor-HHS and Education bill.

I hope we all agree that we need to keep our commitment to veterans by supporting veterans benefits and military construction provisions. But the majority should not use the popularity of veterans funding to build a legislative Christmas tree by including labor and health spending at \$10 billion above the President's request.

No one is fooled by this craven manipulation of benefits for our Nation's veterans. Let's debate these bills individually, rather than holding funding for veterans military care and military facilities hostage with a controversial bill.

#### MAKING HISTORIC INVESTMENT IN OUR VETERAN CARE

(Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. BOYDA of Kansas. Madam Speaker, veterans are a number one issue in the State of Kansas. We found it just appalling how shameful the lack of funding for our veterans had become.

When I came to this Congress, I can't tell you how pleased I was that we put \$5.2 billion of emergency spending into our veterans funding, and a lot of that came right into the good hospitals of Kansas. That \$5.2 billion of emergency funding was also called "pork." How somebody could call funding our veterans "pork" was just beyond me.

Today, we are making a historic investment in our veteran care. I am hoping that we can come together across the aisle in a bipartisan manner and stand up for our veterans and insist that our President sign this bill and start to take care of our veterans as they should have been.

#### CONCERN OVER DELAY IN FUNDING FOR VETERANS

(Mr. KLINE of Minnesota asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KLINE of Minnesota. Madam Speaker, I rise today to join my colleagues in asking the leadership of this House to bring the Military Construction and VA funding bill to the floor for a stand-alone vote.

Earlier this year, many of us felt the pain when a young marine in my district committed suicide after honorably serving in Iraq after he visited two VA hospitals. We recognize, as a body here, that we need to provide the funding for our VA. We passed the bill in this House, 409-2. This is a bill with bipartisan support.

We have heard rhetoric from the other side of the floor that says this is so important that we should pass this legislation no matter what pork-laden legislation it's tied to. That's what is the trouble here, my colleagues, is that the leadership of this House has taken a cynical action to attach an important bill that has strong bipartisan support to a piece of legislation they know that many of us did not support and the President has promised a veto.

I ask the leadership to reach out, as one of my colleagues said, and work in a bipartisan way, which is easily done by separating this legislation. Let's get it done today.

#### OUR COMMITMENT TO THE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE OVERSEAS

(Mr. PALLONE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PALLONE. Madam Speaker, war has changed, but our commitment to the brave men and women who serve overseas remains the same. This Democratic Congress today is passing a veterans bill prioritizing veterans by fully funding the Veterans Administration. We recognize the changing needs of our new veterans by allocating funding to address conditions like PTSD, and we supported a pay raise for military families that this President, who has no trouble sending our troops and billions of dollars into Iraq, called unnecessary.

Now, today, we are going to finally pass this Veterans appropriations bill. We are going to keep the promise we made to service men and women when they volunteered to serve our Nation overseas by taking care of them when they come home. This is the largest veterans increase for health care in

history. This is the commitment of the Democratic prompt of the Democratic Congress, and we are going to make sure it happens today, regardless of what the President decides to do, if he vetoes it or not.

We will just come back again and again and again regardless of his veto. We are tired of the fact that this President gets up and says that he supports these initiatives but then vetoes them.

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#### TRICK OR TREATING IN CONGRESS

(Mrs. BACHMANN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BACHMANN. Madam Speaker, Halloween was last week, but trick or treating may be a part of the House of Representatives this week if the Democrats have their way on the veterans funding bill.

It was over 140 days ago that this Congress passed a veterans funding bill. It was a good bill. So why hasn't this bill made its way to the President's desk? The President has said he will sign this bill. Our veterans need this funding. They deserve this funding that the bill would provide.

Instead, the Democrats are preempting Thanksgiving holiday by serving up a turkey of a funding bill, a turkey that is filled with pork-based stuffing.

The business of national defense and the business of taking care of the very real needs of our veterans is just too important just to satisfy the urge to spend extra money that we just don't have in order to fund pet projects.

I want to say thank you to America's veterans, to those veterans who go to our veterans health care center in St. Cloud, Minnesota. I want to thank you for what you have done, for your sacrifice for this country.

Let's pass this bill.

#### MOMENT OF SILENCE HONORING THE SACRIFICE OF SERGEANT LOUIS GRIESE

(Mr. KAGEN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. KAGEN. Madam Speaker, Louis Griesse served with honor, with courage and skill; and last week on October 31, he lost his life while serving his third tour of duty in Iraq.

Please join me in honoring his memory. He leaves behind a wife, Stephany, and 4-month-old daughter, Skylar.

Sergeant Louis Griesse of Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, was killed as a result of wounds incurred from a roadside bomb. His family believes in service to one's Nation. A true believer in service, Sergeant Griesse followed in the footsteps of his father who fought in the Korean War.

Sergeant Griesse's mother, Susan Frihart, described her son, saying, "He